

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Carol C. Lam***

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***For Immediate Release***

**NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY** - April 8, 2004

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced that Terry James Smith was sentenced, on April 7, 2004, to a term of 41 months, to be followed by three years of supervised release and restitution in the amount of \$136,000. This sentence resulted from Smith's plea of guilty to mail fraud and wire fraud on January 16, 2004.

The case involved Smith defrauding various charities by falsely claiming that his wife was killed in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. According to Assistant United States Attorney Steve Miller, who prosecuted the case, Smith contacted the American Red Cross, as well as other charities and government agencies, claiming that his wife's death caused severe financial hardship and requesting assistance in supporting 10 children. The San Diego Regional Fraud Task Force investigated Smith's claim and learned that Smith's wife was still alive and living in Jamaica after her deportation in 1999. Authorities also determined that Smith did not have the 10 children he claimed to have; Smith only supported one child at the time of the terrorist attacks.

Based upon his false claims, Smith received approximately \$136,000 from various charities, including the American Red Cross, Safe Horizons, the Robin Hood Relief Fund and the Avon Hearts of America Children's Charity. Smith also made unsuccessful applications to the California Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board, the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund of 2001, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Emphasizing the significance of the sentence imposed in this case, United States Attorney Lam said, "The substantial term of imprisonment imposed in this case is fully justified by the nature of the defendant's offensive conduct. It is just punishment for reprehensible criminal activity."

The San Diego Regional Fraud Task Force is a multi-agency task force operating out of the United States Secret Service Office in San Diego. The task force is made up of agents and investigators from the United States Secret Service, San Diego Police Department, and the United States Postal Inspection Service.

#### **DEFENDANT**

Terry James Smith

#### **MAXIMUM PENALTIES**

Mail Fraud, 18 U.S.C. §1341- 5 years imprisonment and/or a \$250,000 fine.

Wire Fraud, 18 U.S.C. §1343- 5 years imprisonment and/or a \$250,000 fine.

#### **AGENCY**

San Diego Regional Fraud Task Force